COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Colchester, CT

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, February 3, 2022
BOE Budget Committee Meeting 9:00 AM
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Jessica Morozowich, Marguerite Gignac, Donna Antonacci

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Superintendent Jeffrey Burt, CFO Maggie Cosgrove, Director of Teaching and Learning Dr. Charles Hewes, and Director of Educational Operations Mario Hurtado

OTHERS PRESENT: Board of Education Vice-Chair Mary Tomasi, Board of Education Member Christopher Rivers, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Heather Petit

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Call to Order
Chair Morozowich called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM

2. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

None.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

3.1 Public Comment
None.

4. *APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 Approval of January 6, 2022 Minutes
Motion by: M.Gignac
To approve the minutes of theJanuary 6, 2022 Budget Committee Meeting
Second by: D.Antonacci
Vote: Unanimous
Roll call: Jessica Morozowich, Marguerite Gignac, Donna Antonacci

4.2 Approval of November 4, 2021 Minutes
Motion by: Jessica Morozowich
To approve the minutes of the November 4, 2021 Budget Committee Meeting
Second by: Marguerite Gignac

Vote: Unanimous
Roll call: Jessica Morozowich, Marguerite Gignac, Donna Antonacci,

5. *PRIORITY DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

5.1 Update on 2022-2023 Budget

Superintendent Burt gave an overview of the 2022-2023 budget process as it currently stands including proposed areas of increase and reduction. Superintendent Burt said the benefits position will be part of next year's budget as part of the finance department restructuring. He reported that the school buildings have areas in need of repair so those allocations for that work will be included. The cost for extended school year (ESY) students was underestimated for last year so that will be revised going forward. Superintendent Burt said that the technology supply line was moved back into the budget. This year it was funded through the ARPA grant. There will be a slight increase in the software line specifically at the elementary levels for intervention and progress monitoring. C3 will be moving completely into the town's budget but there will be a slight increase due to payroll costs that BOE will need to absorb. Preschool tuition will decrease $75 for half-day and $150 for school day making an approximately $40,000 difference between this year and next. Chair Morozowich asked that the full amount of increase and decrease be listed on the document. Superintendent Burt said the budget is still being finalized but will have more information within the next week.

5.2 Draft Capital Improvement Plan

Superintendent Burt discussed the draft Capital Improvement Plan with details per school. CES and JJIS need replacement carpet, updated lighting and HVAC repairs. Director of Educational Operations Mario Hurtado noted that we have utilized all funding sources possible to cover costs of updates and are able to get a lot done but there is further work that needs to occur. Mr. Hurtado gave an overview of the HVAC project that will be funded through the ARPA grant. Chair Morozowich asked Mr. Hurtado to give her, Christopher Rivers, and Rosemary Gignac a tour in the near future.

5.3 Underground Storage Tank at Bacon Academy - Update

Superintendent Burt stated that the underground retaining wall to the ventilation system can not sustain the weight of an above-ground tank. Mr. Hurtado said that due to this an above ground tank is no longer an option. A new plan to replace it with a new underground tank in the same space is the best option. The technology and size have dramatically changed since the older tank was installed. These are now safe options and will reduce our costs as landscaping/fencing will no longer be needed with an underground tank. Mr. Hurtado said that the RFP will be updated to put the new tank farther back than where the current tank is currently located. The plan is for the work to occur over the summer. Mr. Hurtado said that 30 years is the standard, with a 10 year extension possible, for underground tanks and by law the tank will have to be dug up. The plan is to bring this to BOF in March for an appropriation once estimated costs are secure.

5.4 Update on Heating Oil Prices

Superintendent Burt wanted to bring this forward as there has been ongoing discussion about how the district's buildings are heated. In terms of the budget, Superintendent Burt stated the cost will have to be projected several months ahead of what it might be. CFO Cosgrove explained the advantages of locking in the price of oil with the caveat that there is no guarantee that the locked-in price will not be higher than the average oil price some months of the year. CFO Cosgrove said it is a risk no matter what decision is made. Chair Morozowich clarified the three options: lock in a price now, lock in for a specific period of time, or do not lock in. Chair Morozowich said her personal recommendation would be to lock in the price and create stability in the budget. Donna Antonacci agreed. Superintendent Burt said he will bring this forward to the full board for discussion and possible action at the next Board of Education meeting.

5.5 Revised Preschool Long-range Plan

Superintendent Burt discussed the preschool program. He said the district did not see the enrollment demand they thought they would. Superintendente Burt discussed a revised configuration for 2022-2023. This year the district used ARPA funding to add a fifth classroom for a full school day section. The initial plan was to add a sixth classroom in 2022-2023; however, based on the demand he recommends keeping the five sections but making another of those sections a full school day section instead of a half day AM/PM. The district also did not need the grant funds to support preschool transportation as with only a few students requesting transportation the district was able to utilize current special education transportation. The change in funding will allow for continued special education staffing in preschool and to assist in lowering the cost of tuition. Chair Morozowich stated that although early childhood education is very important, with the ECS reductions coming, the funding cliff presented by the ARPA funds, a capital improvement plan that has yet to be fully funded, and understanding what community members will support for an increase in funding, it is simply not fiscally responsible to move forward with this plan that will increase operating costs significantly. The adjustments to the preschool plan will be brought to the full board.

6. BUDGET REPORTS

6.1 Monthly Budget Reports

CFO Cosgrove presented the January 2022 budget report. She indicated there have been updates to the report to reflect magnet school tuition, vo-ag tuition, and special education transportation cost. The pupil transportation line which shows a large deficit will be revised upon reimbursement received from the state. CFO Cosgrove specified that insurance and benefits are fluid with payroll and will change monthly. Cyber Liability insurance has cost more than what was initially budgeted due to cybersecurity.

6.2 Cafeteria Fund

CFO Cosgrove presented the December 2021 Cafeteria Financial Report. Superintendent noted that in the past there were years the Board was losing money but due to restructuring the district has been able to self-sustain and even potentially note a small surplus. If at the end of the year the surplus remains, it is possible to have a reserve to assist with future year fluctuations. CFO Cosgrove said there is a state cap in regard to

cafeteria surplus but will have to see if the state applies that cap given that the surplus is due to the high level of reimbursement from the state due to COVID.

6.3 Health Insurance Reserve
CFO Cosgrove shared the December 2021 Health Insurance Reserve Report.

6.4 Special Education Excess Cost Report
Superintendent Burt gave a brief overview of the excess cost report. CFO Cosgrove stated that the state caps per pupil reimbursement at 75% of costs. Superintendent Burt said there was an increase due to two students moving into district that needed services. This is why the district budgets gross and not net for Special Education. If the district did not, these mid-year changes could derail a budget. Chair Morozwich stated the district has done a great job bringing students back into the district and keeping students in their hometown is what is best for them.

6.5 Use of Schools
CFO Cosgrove presented the Use of School Report. The funds for the month of January show an increase over December as the facilities are slowly starting to be used again. CFO Cosgrove said the district charges a set custodial rate for groups that utilize our buildings outside of school hours.

6.6 Capital Reserve
CFO Cosgrove presented the Capital Reserve Report. Superintendent Burt said we should have been increasing our technology over the past few years in the budget but state funding has assisted in technology costs.

6.7 Budget Transfers Under $5,000
For information purposes only:
Bacon Academy budget transfer for Software.
Bacon Academy budget transfer for the Brick program.

7. OLD BUSINESS

7.1 Update on Federal Grants
Superintendent Burt and Dr. Charles Hewes gave an update on federal grants. Dr. Hewes stated that we received more funding than the district has had in the past due to Esser and ARPA funding. Descriptions of each grant was also part of the report. Dr. Hewes said that every single dollar is allocated for each of the grants and the plan is approved by the state. Chair Morozowich suggested removing the column on expended/allocated funds and instead put a description of what the grant is specifically funding. It was agreed to change the document to reflect the purpose rather than what is spent as it is fluid and will be continually changing.

8. *NEW BUSINESS

None.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NEW ISSUES RAISED OR SUBJECTS DEVELOPED

9.1 Public Comment

None.

10. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:46 AM